

Testimony Regarding the Governor's Midterm Budget Adjustments for FY 13

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Appropriations Committee

February 22, 2012

Dear Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

We are testifying today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

We are concerned to see the funding for School Based Health Centers was reduced by \$412,592 (4%) in the Governor's midterm budget,¹ which will impede the ability of existing health centers to provide services to the children in their schools. This funding cut runs counter to the Governor's promotion of the community schools model and availability of competitive funding through the Department of Education to create more community schools, which include wraparound services that address the holistic needs of children, particularly access to comprehensive physical and mental health services.² Unaddressed health problems prevent children from learning, and the problems grow greater the longer they remain untreated.

We are particularly concerned about this cut's impact on mental health care access, as it is estimated that only about one quarter of children who need mental health care receive it – even before this proposed cut in funding. Schools are a critical part of the mental health care delivery system. School Based Health Centers provide individual, group and family counseling for mental health issues in more than 40,000 visits on a yearly basis.³ Such mental health treatment can both reduce stigma and facilitate access.

Early intervention is an important investment for the state to make because it creates better outcomes for children and provides significant cost savings in the long run due to improved health and decreased usage of high cost emergency interventions such as hospitalization and residential treatment, and we would therefore **urge the Appropriations Committee to reverse the proposed cuts to School Based Health Centers.**

¹ See Dannel Malloy, "FY 2013 Governor's Midterm Budget Adjustments" (February 8, 2012) at B-79 (line item "School Based Health Clinics"), available at

http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/budget/2012_midterm_budget/pdfs/fy2013midtermbudget_forweb.pdf

² SB 24, Sec 4 (7)(A) vii

³ "Protecting the Health of Connecticut's Young People," *Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers*, (October 2010), available at: <http://www.ctschoolhealth.org/Announcements/view.asp?id=54>